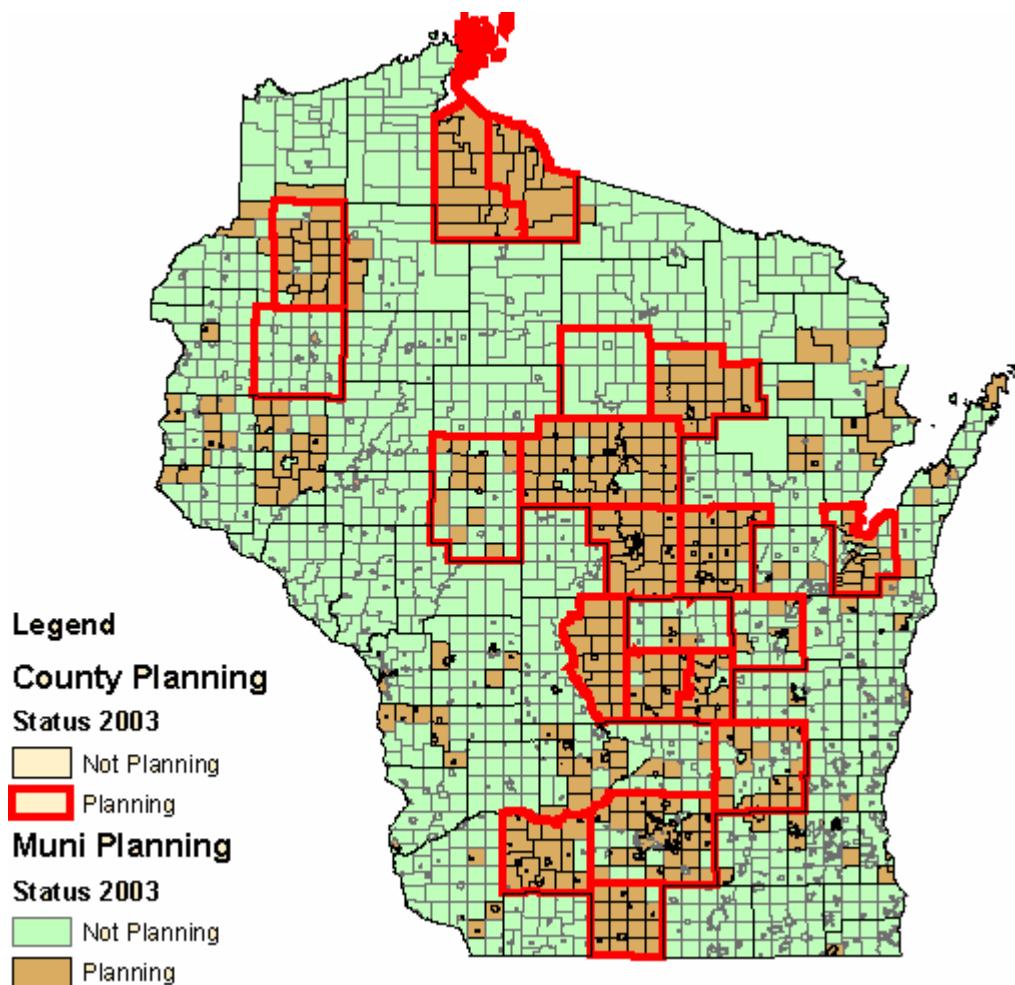


(Reprinted from the ***Timberline*** - Wisconsin DNR – Division of Forestry internal staff newsletter – 4<sup>th</sup> quarter 2003 issue.)

## Smart Forestry for Smart Growth

By Teague Prichard and Sarah Attwood

While they may not always want to admit it, foresters have more in common with planners than you might think. The forestry profession has long recognized that sustainable forest management requires good data, a comprehensive approach, and the kind of long range thinking that thoroughly considers the future consequences of the decisions we make today. Foresters are great planners, and Wisconsin's new Comprehensive Planning law (Smart Growth) provides a perfect forum for their skills.



As Dylan Jenkins and Dan Goerlich write in the Journal of Forestry, "Foresters have a competitive advantage in the local land use planning process: We perform land use planning and management activities for a living. No new skills are necessary." For all the heated debate you may be hearing about Smart Growth, from politicians in the paper to your neighbors down the street, Smart Growth planning simply means planning for the future of our towns and cities in the same way that we plan for the future of our forests.

More often than not, when people in Wisconsin use the term Smart Growth they are referring to local comprehensive planning. Between 1999 and 2001, the state adopted some of the most significant changes to its planning and land use laws since the early 1940s. The new Smart Growth comprehensive planning law requires that towns, villages, cities, counties, and regional planning commissions adopt a comprehensive plan by 2010 to guide future decision making. Although Wisconsin's Smart Growth plans are required to address a series of nine elements, communities are actually given broad freedom in the specific issues they choose to address in their plans.

From a forestry perspective, I'm afraid to say that so far most of Wisconsin's Smart Growth plans are not very smart at all. There are very few communities that are adequately considering forest resources when they put together their comprehensive plans. In many cases the communities that should be paying the most attention to their forests including those that are heavily forested, located in or next to a county, state or national forest, or dependent on the forest products industry, are not considering them at all.

In hopes of reversing the trend towards overlooking forest resources in local comprehensive plans, Forestry is partnering with the Department's Land Use Team, UW Extension, the Governor's Council on Forestry, and other interested individuals and organizations to create the Smart Forestry for Smart Growth campaign. Smart Forestry for Smart Growth is a three-tiered approach aimed at educating private citizens, local officials, and land use planners about the importance of Wisconsin's forest resources. We hope to provide communities with the resources they need to better understand how to address and include forests in their comprehensive plans. In addition it is our aim to provide foresters with the tools they need to effectively address and support the inclusion of forestry into comprehensive planning.

As stewards of Wisconsin's forests for nearly 100 years, forestry knows about the wise use and sustainable management of our shared resources. We also know that planning for the future is not always quick or easy, but it's worth it when you consider the consequences of not planning at all. Comprehensive planning and sustainable forestry share a commitment to the long-term sustainability of our environmental, economic, and social resources. Wisconsin's comprehensive planning law offers an opportunity to incorporate forestry into local and regional plans to sustain the health and livelihood of Wisconsin's forests for current and future generations. Let's get to it.

**Resources are available to help you are available on the Smart Forestry for Smart Growth page:** <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/land/forestry/SmartForestry/index.htm>